

METHODS

MAP WORK

The initial planning for the site surveys consisted of examining information collected from previous surveys and prioritize the needs for additional survey work. Biologists familiar with Montgomery County were consulted to identify potentially significant areas. Previous survey information was accessed through the files and database of the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NC NHP). In some instances, locations for rare species were previously identified, but description of the quality and composition of the surrounding habitat was incomplete. In other cases, existing information indicated that potential existed for as-yet-unidentified rare or unusual species.

For most of the areas surveyed, no previous record of biological survey existed. Selection of areas with potential for biologically significant features was accomplished by several means. Areas with unusual topography (e.g., broad floodplains, steep slopes, or riparian buffers) or those containing extensive forested areas were identified on the most recent U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 1:24,000 scale topographic maps; as a check on accuracy of the USGS map information, many areas were later reviewed on more recent aerial photographs. Geologic maps were also consulted to identify areas that may support rare plant species or uncommon community types. Special attention was given to areas in the vicinity of known sites with unusual species or natural community types.

Numerous potentially significant sites, ranging in size from several acres to hundreds of acres, were outlined on topographic maps. The area of each site was derived using topographic maps and geographical information system (GIS). Collectively, these potentially significant sites covered thousands of acres in the county. Many sites contained stream buffers, uplands, and wetlands. The potential sites were then compared to maps at the Montgomery County tax office to obtain the landowner names and addresses needed to request permission to survey. Letters from the LandTrust for Central North Carolina requesting permission to survey were then sent to the landowners. Excluded from the inventory were lands for which the request to survey was denied.

FIELD WORK

The survey work was done on both public and private lands. Site surveys were conducted from June 1999 to December 2000 by Moni Bates, an independent contract biologist, and Pete Diamond with the North Carolina Zoological Park. Various amounts of time was devoted to field work, map work, and report writing throughout this period. Due to time and funding constraints, animal surveys comprised a smaller portion of the total project. Animal surveys were conducted from by Jeff Beane with the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences. Animal surveys focused on wetland areas with potential for rare reptiles and amphibians, and unfragmented habitat with potential for forest interior species.